DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 073 124 TM 002 367

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| AUTHOR | Farrar, Carroll D. |
| TITLE | The Social Studies Curriculum and Standardized Achievement Tests. |
| PUB DATE | Nov 72 |
| NOTE | 16p.; Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association, New Orleans, November, 1972 |
| EDRS PRICE | MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29 |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Achievement Tests; *Curriculum Development; Educational History; *Social Studies; Standardized Tests; *Test Construction |

ABSTRACT

Curriculum developments in general from 1893 through the 1960's are first discussed, followed by curriculum developments in the social studies from 1916 to the present time. Progress in standardized social studies achievement tests dates from the early 1930's, at which time a Commission on the Social Studies attempted to apply new test techniques to the social studies. The key issues were the stating of precise objectives and the manner in which test items would be selected. Current tests are found to be of limited value because of a lack of clarity concerning the content of social studies tests. If standardized achievement tests in the social sciences are to continue to be used, the most sophisticated systems available should be used to derive test items and achievement tests based on these instructional objectives. The development of such achievement tests could contribute to a wider acceptance of new instructional materials, and the diagnostic values of these tests could be of considerable aid to teachers and other professionals concerned with the social science programs. (DB)

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ED 073124

# The Social Studies Curriculum and Standardized Achievement Tests

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Paper Presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association

New Orleans, November, 1972

The Committee of Ten, in 1893, recommended four parallel curricula for the high school: (1) classical, (2) Latin-scientific, (3) modern language, and (4) English. The Committee was completely frank in its evaluation of its recommendations. Members pointed out that the last two programs were inferior to the others because no Latin or Greek was included in the modern-language program and the English program included only one foreign language. We have come a long way. Eighty years ago, classical and traditional subjects dominated the school curriculum. Furthermore, standardized college entrance requirements and accrediting associations were often designed to keep the curriculum from changing.[1]

## Curriculum Developments in General

Between the turn of the century and the beginning of World War II several powerful forces were at work which would eventually bring change. The loosening of family and community ties, urbanization, population mobility, transportation, industralization and other changes in society made the inadequacy of education more apparent to the general population than it previously had been. Compulsory school attendance laws, passed in all states by 1918, broadened the interest in education and would eventually remove it from control by exclusive groups with narrow aims. The general population was trusting its problems to the schools, although belatedly and reluctantly in some places. Educators with new ideas were developing new positions and at least other educators were listening. The philosophy of John Dewey which emphasized "education as life" was

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[1]Newton Edwards and Herman G. Richey, The School in the American Social Order (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947), pp 737-741.

received with much attention by educators who questioned the position of education as just a preparation for life. Research and experimentation in education was being accepted and the federal government in 1917 broke the shell of tradition by helping to finance vocational education in agriculture, home economics, and similar areas.

Another indication that the wholly traditional, conventional education was slipping during this period was the exceleration of the junior high school movement. Apparently originating in an attempt to revise the curriculum and departmentalize the upper grades of the elementary school, the junior high school was created to extend the secondary school downward to adequately provide the education needed for success in college, and assure better articulation between the elementary and high school. During this period junior high school teachers seem to have discovered sufficient freedom to provide socializing experiences and to experiment with other curriculum innovations to better serve the unique needs of young adolescents.[2]

The period between World Wars I and II saw a fruition of some movements started earlier, the initiation of other changes, increased federal participation in education and the completion of very significant curriculum research. They were trying years of economic boom and depression. In the beginning of the period, state laws promoting loyalty and unity were popular and at the end the federal government seemed prepared to help cure economic ills by establishing a system of education parallel to that of the states.

In the area of positive curriculum accomplishments, many of the extra-curricula activities of previous years became a definite part of the

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[2]Ibid., pp. 828-830.

regular schedule. Among these new courses were art, music, health and physical education. The period also witnessed a rapid growth of student activities and vocational education. Attempts to help students unify their experience, transfer their training and generalize their knowledge by reducing the lines of separation among subject matter areas resulted in broad field courses, fused courses, correlation of courses, and the core curricula. Although not adopted widely these innovations received sufficient attention and experimentation to become a solid part of American thinking in the area of curriculum.[3]

Beginning in 1933 and ending in 1941 the Progressive Education Association conducted the famous Eight Year Study. Its purpose was to determine whether core and other new curricula of the progressive schools prepared students as well for college success as did the traditional college preparatory curricula and methods. The students from the two types of schools were matched in pairs for scholastic aptitude, interests, and socio-economic backgrounds. As almost every high school student knows the 1,475 graduates of progressive schools were slightly more successful in college than their counterparts who had graduated from traditional high schools. Unfortunately, these findings have probably influenced college entrance requirements more than they have the typical high school curriculum.[4]

For a brief period following World War II, emphasis was placed on Education for Life Adjustment. This type of education was designed

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[3]H. G. Good, A History of American Education. (Toronto: The Macmillian Company, 1970), pp. 432-435.

[4]Ibid., pp. 521-522.

to provide education which better prepared "all American youth to live democratically with satisfaction to themselves and profit to society as home members, workers and citizens."[5] Although this statement lends itself to various interpretations, advocates of Life Adjustment Education were agreed on its meaning and elaborated on the curriculum necessary to achieve its objectives in the literature of that era. This movement based on the ideas of John Dewey emphasized student activities, vocational education, gudiance and other special programs that are a part of most high schools of today.

During this period, interdisciplinary curriculum patterns increased markedly in both the elementary and even the secondary schools. The professional literature, teacher education institutions, and teacher workshops increasingly urged teachers to make instruction interesting, meaningful and practical to students by the selection of content and with numerous new media and activities. For many schools however, the text-book continued to be the most accurate representation of the curriculum and reading, teacher explanation and recitation was the chief means of instruction.[6]

The launching of the first Russian Sputnik in 1957 led to the questioning of much that had previously been accepted in American education. With the National Defense Education Act of 1958, the federal government reflected the determination of the nation's leaders to improve instructional programs in science, mathematics, modern foreign languages

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[5] Life Adjustment Education For Every Youth, U. S. Office of Education, Federal Security Agency, Bulletin 1951, No. 22. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1951. p. 4.

[6] op. cit, Good. pp. 458-460.

and other critical subjects. The educational world moved rapidly to develop the new programs.

During the decade of the 1960's the plight of the disadvantaged and neglected was also dramatized by demonstrations and confrontations. Minority groups and students found means of forcing society to listen to their complaints, to become concerned about groups that had previously received little or no attention and to take action designed to correct some inequities. Like the interest in improving scientific education, the federal government and its agencies, state education agencies, local school systems and professional associations became involved in a movement to improve the educational opportunities of our young people. Better education had to be provided to improve the position of the United States in international affairs. The schools had to be racially integrated, and compensatory education would have to help the disadvantaged overcome limitations of family and social background and succeed in school and society. Education had to be made relevant to the society and even to the individual student. These were some of the demands that were made by citizens, students, and school people.

Probably no period in the history of American education has been so exhilerating for educators. Money became available for all levels of education from the nursery school through the community college and university professors were involved in many ways. Everything from research and theory to application and supervision in the local school received attention.

## Curriculum Developments in the Social Studies

A review of twentieth century curriculum developments in the social studies is both encouraging and depressing. Intellectural, governmental, scientific, industrial, and labor leaders stress the importance of social understanding and sophistication to the survival of democracy and the human race. Unfortunately, unanimity almost ends at that level. Some schools are using materials designed by teams of experts from the fields of social science, psychology and education. Able, imaginative teachers often use these materials with above average students in fortunate suburbs.[7] At the other end of the scale, the social studies curriculum is determined by the textbook prescribed for the course and the principle learning activity is memorization of material deemed important by an unimaginative teacher.

In 1899 the American Historical Association's Committee of Seven published its report, "The Study of History in Schools." The Committee recommended that the four years of high school should consist of "(1) ancient history, especially Greek and Roman to 800 or a few years later; (2) medieval and modern European history, to the present; (3) English history; and (4) American history and civil government."[8]

The historical emphasis recommended by the Committee of Seven in 1899 soon met with considerable dissatisfaction. As the National Education Association assumed leadership in curriculum revision, the recommendations of various committees and study groups reflected less concern with college

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[7]Edwin Fenton, The New Social Studies. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1967), p. 4.

[8]Erling M. Hunt,"Changing Perspectives in the Social Studies", Perspectives in High School Social Studies. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p. 9.

entrance and a greater emphasis on matters relating more directly to the lives of students. In 1916 the Committee on Social Studies of the National Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (established by the NEA) released its report which was to influence the social studies curriculum to the present time.

The recommendations made in this report reflected the concerns of the committee which was composed of high school teachers and school administrators. In the first place, they adopted the term "social studies" as the designation for curricula dealing with man and society. Secondly, the areas to be studied were broadened to provide the beginnings of the interdisciplinary structure.

In the secondary schools, the effect of the recommendations would be different from the influence it would have in the elementary schools. Secondary schools would include some social studies disciplines other than history in the curriculum. The number of such courses would increase with time. In addition it would often mean that more effort would be made to relate the social science disciplines to each other and to current affairs. In some high schools, teachers, parents, and students would plan social studies programs of an interdisciplinary nature. In the elementary school the departure would be much greater.

During the period following the 1916 report of the Committee on Social Studies, changes were made in leadership in social studies and in the entire field of curriculum planning which were to dominate these areas for the next forty years. The National Council for the Social Studies was formed as a division of the National Education Association in 1921.

Formation of this group, with the imposing strength of the larger group of which it was a part, was another step toward the acceptance of social studies as the replacement of the separate subjects terminology. Furthermore, leadership in curriculum was decentralized and curriculum plans increasingly originated at the state and even local school administrative levels. Historians, geographers, political scientists, and economists from liberal arts colleges were replaced as curriculum leaders by a new group of specialists in curriculum and social studies. The new leaders were consultants from teacher education institutions and state and local education officials who were usually graduates of such institutions.

It has been stated earlier that the curriculum departure during the 1916 - 1957 period was much greater in the elementary school than at the secondary levels. For various reasons, the influence of the educational philosopher, John Dewey, research like the Eight Year Study and the new educational leadership had their greatest impact at this level. The secondary school continued to be influenced by the academicians as well as the new educational leadership and often followed somewhat slowly the patterns established in the elementary school.

In the 1920's many elementary schools embraced the interdisciplinary movement. Acceptance of Dewey's concept of education as problem solving in a successful contemporary life, not a learning of facts in preparation for a future adult life, led elementary curriculum people to search for realistic problems for the curriculum that often did not fit into conventional subject matter categories. Apparently originating in

the teaching of agriculture, the project approach to elementary social studies achieved popularity. Children learned facts and theories not as an end in themselves but as they became necessary to solve problems confronted in completing the project.

The project approach eventually came to be known as the activity curriculum and the instructional unit became the means by which it was organized. The planning of units by the classroom teacher placed greater responsibility for curriculum on the classroom teacher. The teacher might plan the units for the class or cooperate with students and/or parents in doing so. In many cases, the assistance and guidance given was a group of resource units from which instructional units could be developed to meet the unique needs of members of a particular class. These resource units often provided substantial help by suggesting numerous objectives, activities, materials, resources and even evaluation techniques that the teacher might find useful in developing a unit for a class.

Another significant contribution of this period was the development and application of the expanding-environments curriculum design. This is one example of a curriculum that was intended to provide learning experiences suited to the interests and developing levels of comprehension of children. The social studies curriculum was structured with the child, his family, and classroom as the center. This was what he studied first in school. As the child grew older and his perspective broadened, the scope of his studies widened to the study of neighborhood, community, state, and other countries. With maturity the children also studied the present society in relation to past societies.[9]

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[9]John Jarolimek, Social Studies in Elementary Education. (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1967) p. 49-50.

Following the widespread reexamination of education of the late 1950's, extensive funds were made available for the development of social studies programs for elementary and secondary schools. Under amendments to the National Defense Education Act, federal money became available to history, geography, civics and other subjects. Additional funds for the development of social studies materials have been provided by private foundations, business, professional organizations and public school systems.

There are some changes in objectives that are emphasized by most of the new projects. Chief among these is the emphasis on the teaching of concepts and generalizations instead of isolated facts and unrelated ideas. Another objective that is given equal emphasis is that of developing inquiry skills that are useful in conducting investigations, in objectively analyzing social problems and issues, and in evaluating proposed solutions to problems through the application of criteria derived from the appropriate social science discipline. The teaching of "good citizenship" and loyalty to country through life-situations and community-projects has given way to the use of techniques of inquiry from the social science disciplines to objectively evaluate what should be preserved and what should be changed in the society.

Three types of attitudes and values have been identified with which social studies teachers must deal. Behavioral values and attitudes (primarily those rules of conduct necessary for classroom and school continuance) must be established by some means. Unfortunately, some authorities seem to infer that these can be established quickly and simply

by arbitrary means. Procedural values (those dealing with methods by which social scientists systematically search for evidence and objectively analyze and evaluate findings) must be taught as the appropriate method in the social sciences.

Substantive values and attitudes are those that deal with many areas of American life in which acceptable standards of behavior vary widely. Some examples of such areas of behavior are: population control, conformity in dress and hair styles, and military policy. Authorities are inclined to agree that all aspects of such questions should be studied including the consequences of alternative courses of action and decisions made democratically. However, agreement is far from unanimous. Positions in such areas are often taken by students very early in life, and the community that supports the school will often refuse to accept a liberal position in this sensitive area.[10]

The many projects have produced a variety of materials for use. Some project teams have developed exclusively elementary or secondary materials. From other sources, materials are available for grades 1-12 or 1-14. Other programs overlap elementary and secondary schools. Materials are available that emphasize the relationship between social sciences and the humanities. There were projects that produced materials that emphasize the unity of the social sciences while others were developed with the assumption that the single discipline approach to instruction would be the dominant pattern of organization. Projects have made materials available to give students direct encounters with primary source materials. Some

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[10] op. cit. Fenton, p. 6 - 27.

projects have placed emphasis on materials for area studies while others emphasize direct contributions that social sciences can make to citizenship education. This variety has given school systems a wide range of choice in the selection of instructional materials. It has complicated the decision making process of the curriculum workers who must select materials for use at the state and local levels.

## Progress in Standardized Social Studies Achievement Tests

In the early 1930's an ambitious project was undertaken by social scientists, headed by A. C. Krey, and test experts, headed by Truman L. Kelley. The plan was to apply the knowledge gained by the new test techniques to the social studies. The report of this committee of the American Historical Association is entitled, Test and Measurements in the Social Sciences. The report is a record of the committee's accomplishments, failures, and disagreements over a four-year period.

> The volume consists of contributions by a number of specialists in social science and testing; however, the dominant figures are those whose names appear on the title page, namely, Professors Kelley and Krey. The former, psychologist in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, and the latter, Professor of History at the University of Minnesota, are able spokesmen for two divergent schools of thought regarding the nature of social science in instruction and its susceptibility to measurement. Underneath the pages of statistical treatments, item analysis, and general commentary exists a deep cleavage between these men and the kinds of thinking each upholds.[11]

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[11] W. George Gaines. Unpublished abstract of Test and Measurements in the Social Sciences. Part IV of the Report of the Commission on the Social Studies by Truman L. Kelley and A. C. Krey. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1934. Abstract prepared at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, 1972.

In the early 1930's one of the most divisive issues was that of stating precise objectives. The people interested in testing wanted the social scientists to formulate an exact statement of the purposes and ends of instruction to serve as a basis of measurement. They apprently found some of the purposes that were stated by social scientists to be so broad and indefinite that they were useless as a basis for measurement. On the other hand, Professor Krey insisted that the important goals and aims of social science instruction were too complex for precise statements.

The other key issue which divided the Committee, which completed its work in 1934, was the manner in which test items would be selected. This also raised questions as to the nature of test validity and reliability. Test items were selected by experts in the social sciences. Professor Kelley, the test expert, did not convince the social scientists of limitations that should have been avoided in the selection procedure. The use of statistical techniques to determine item selection proved difficult for the subject matter specialist to accept. Through the application of these procedures, items were often eliminated that social science experts had considered the very best, while other mediocre items were allowed to remain.

No other projects of such magnitude in the area of social studies testing have been attempted. Apparently, the content of current tests is determined by a survey of instructional materials currently in use. Such tests are frequently critized because of the over emphasis on history and recall of factual information. A lack of clarity concerning the content of social studies tests limits their value as a means of

improving instruction or making meaningful interpretations of student performance.

For several reasons, the time is ideal for the application of the testing expertise that has been developed over the last forty years to the new social studies programs that have been developed during the 1960's with the social scientists, social studies specialists, psychologists and teachers working together. Objectives for these programs have often been stated in behavioral terms and instructional systems designed to accomplish them. If standardized achievement tests in the social studies are to continue to be a part of the American scene, the most sophisticated systems available should be used to derive test items and achievement tests based on these instructional objectives.

The development of such achievement tests could conceivably contribute to a wider acceptance of the new instructional materials. Using a new system of instruction is always a difficult task for a teacher. Convincing students and especially parents and members of the community that measurable progress has been made can prove even more difficult. Tests that faithfully reflect the objectives of the programs would provide additional confidence to everyone concerned. For teachers and other professional people concerned with the program, the diagnostic value of these tests could be a considerable contribution.

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